

# **Boulder Creek Restoration Project**

**(BCRP)**

## **Recreation Report**

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for:

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Overview of Issues Addressed.....	2
Issue Indicators.....	2
Forest Plan Standards.....	3
Comparison to Desired future Condition .....	3
Affected Environment.....	3
Developed sites.....	3
Dispersed recreation: .....	7
Desired Condition .....	10
Specific Desired Recreation Goals:.....	11
Environmental Consequences .....	14
Alternative 1 – No Action .....	14
Effects Common to all action alternatives.....	14
Alternative 2 - Proposed Action .....	15
Summary .....	16
Effects to Recreation.....	16
Effects to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) .....	16
Supporting Information .....	17
Design Features and Mitigation Measures .....	17
 Table 1. Recreation Resource Indicators and Measures .....	 16

## Introduction

The Boulder Creek Restoration Project (BCRP) planning area has been recognized as a primitive recreation area for more than 30 years. Two Inventoried Roadless Areas or (IRAs), (Katka Peak and Mt. Willard - Lake Estelle) comprise the largest portion of the planning area. Mt. Willard – Lake Estelle Roadless lands extend into Montana and the Kootenai National Forest.

Lands within the BCRP area currently provide opportunities for both primitive and roadside recreation. Also, the BCRP area is distinctive in that it offers exceptionally high scenic quality, natural integrity and a natural appearance throughout vast expanses of roadless lands. Physically, landforms vary from forested side slopes divided by Boulder Creek and its' tributaries to natural openings, rock outcrops and striking, rugged ridgelines. At the same time, remnants of old town sites, sheep herder corrals, verse-painted rocks, and early-day mines reveal industrious human endeavor from times long past. These features add historic interest yet do not subtract from a sense of wholeness or seclusion. With the exception of the established travel corridors, most of these lands are unaffected by human activities. They offer exceptional opportunity for isolation and solitude. Recreationists must use a maximum degree of outdoor skills often in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge, self-reliance and risk.

Trails and roads in this area provide important recreation destination opportunities, as well as access to popular recreation features outside the planning area. This area lies within an hour of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Local and non-local residents seek this locality equally. Roads, trails and open terrain merge with lands managed by Three Rivers District to the east and Sandpoint Ranger District to the southwest. Recreation opportunities within the planning area are accessed via roads and trails from each of the Ranger Districts.

District recreational use has substantially increased in the last 30 years. There is greater demand for recreational facilities than ever before. Lands in the Cabinet Mountains play a very important part in the recreation opportunities provided on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. Mountain biking has burgeoned and traditional uses such as horseback riding, hunting, hiking, camping, fishing and berry picking have increased steadily for years. The BCRP area is popular for equestrian use. The BCRP area offers a range of opportunity that includes easy access to recreation sites, on-road motorized use, primitive landscapes, rivers, creeks and high mountain meadows. All open roads in this area have associated dispersed camping sites. This area is unusual and valuable.

Recreational use within the analysis area is moderate to high. The highest seasons of use are spring through fall.

More than 74 miles of trail are located within the analysis area. (Approximately 25% of the trail mileage on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District.) Trails in the Boulder planning area meet seamlessly with trail networks to the south and east. Combined, these networks provide the longest north-south trail system in the Idaho Panhandle and one of the longest networks in the State of Idaho.

## Overview of Issues Addressed

### *Issue Indicators*

The effects of management activity in the BCRP area on developed and undeveloped recreational opportunities will be measured in changes to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, compliance with the Forest Plan, compliance with roadless lands guidelines, and the degree to which the activities compliment or conflict with recreation desired future condition for sites and experiences. The indicators are described as follows:

### Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Landscape alterations as well as changes in the amount and type of use within an area can alter the scenic integrity or recreational setting. The changes can be short term or lasting. Changes are more experientially sensitive when seen close-up as opposed to those observed at a distance.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a system for defining the types of outdoor recreation opportunities the public might desire as well as identifying the portion of opportunities a given area provides. It is used for planning and managing the recreation resource and recognizes recreation activity, setting and experience opportunities. ROS is based on the following premises:

- People purposefully choose settings for their recreational experience.
- Choices are made with the expectation of achieving particular recreational experiences, and
- It is desirable, from a macro planning perspective, to present a diverse spectrum of activity and recreational setting opportunities, ranging from highly developed to primitive, from which people may choose.

ROS is designed with a spectrum with five different classes ranging from Urban to Primitive. The summer season ROS classes within the analysis area include primarily Semi Primitive Non-Motorized with Roaded Natural corridors.

Although Forest Plan ROS maps display the Katka Peak and Willard- Lake Estelle IRA's as semi primitive non-motorized, roadless Willard- Lake Estelle currently exhibits all the characteristics of a Primitive setting. Past actions such as the cessation of grazing permits in Boulder Meadows (1980's) and road closure and re-contouring (late 1990's) have further secured that primitive setting. The Primitive ROS setting description has been included to detail potential changes to the recreation setting.

The characteristics of the landscape change seasonally with ROS classes generally reflecting more semi-primitive characteristics during the winter. Winter changes the recreation environment from a motorized, roaded experience to a more non-motorized experience. Snow softens the physical edges of human activity and disturbance, reduces the social interaction and muffles sound. The BCRP planning area changes to a Primitive or Semi Primitive Motorized setting during the winter (Snowmobiles are allowed within the planning area).

**Primitive** lands are characterized as lands that are an essentially unmodified environment. The size and configuration of primitive lands assure remoteness from sights and sounds of human activity. Motorized vehicles are not permitted except in extreme emergencies. The user is forced to be self-reliant and should expect risk and challenge. Social encounters are low and the recreational activities are associated with trail use, dispersed camping, berry picking, and hunting.

**Semi Primitive Non-Motorized** lands are characterized as lands that may have subtle modifications which would be noticed, but would not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area. The sight and sound of human activity other than the immediate visitor, is distant and structures are rare. In Boulder, the exception to this is that historic structures and evidence of human endeavor occur throughout the landscape yet are subordinate to the natural panorama. In this analysis area, most lands are semi-primitive non-motorized for all seasons. Social encounters are low and the recreational activities are associated with trail use, dispersed camping, berry picking, and hunting.

**Roaded Natural** lands are generally characterized as natural settings that may have modifications that range from being easily noticeable to strongly dominant to observers in the area. Structures may include power lines, microwave installations and so on. Campgrounds, picnic areas and other designed recreational features are appropriate. Alterations and structures are unnoticed and visually subordinate from sensitive travel routes. Access via designed roads and highways is the norm. The density of recreational use in this planning area is moderate to high.

## Forest Plan Standards

The Forest Plan standards, guidelines and desired conditions are listed in the 2015 IPNF Forest Plan. Details are listed by Management Area 5 (Backcountry / Idaho Roadless Areas) and Management Area 6 (General Forest), Management Area 4a (Hunt Girl - Research Natural Area).

## Comparison to Desired future Condition

Please see Desired Condition section.

## Affected Environment

### *Developed sites*

#### **Black Mountain-**

Moving the Black Mountain Lookout to the new site were analyzed in the 2012 Twentymile Environmental Analysis and will not be re-analyzed here.

#### **Boulder Meadows Trailhead (Horse Camp)**

Boulder Meadows serves as a trailhead hub for several trails that create trail networks in the planning area. It features a popular campsite in open meadows near Boulder Creek, parking for three truck/trailer combinations, several passenger vehicles, hitching rails and a vault toilet. There is no potable water. The trail and access road were established in the late 1990's as part of a motorized closure in the meadows. A rustic fence separates the intended parking area from natural meadows. The trailhead is cramped and poorly designed. Spurs are angled incorrectly and rarely used as pull-ins. Parking congestion is a problem. The wooden fences are sometimes breached or vandalized and need to be improved.

#### **Trails:**

##### **Trail #182- Clifty Mountain Trail**

Trail#182 is a 10.2 mile ridge trail located both within and outside of the Katka roadless area. Trail #182 winds in and out of mixed conifer stands and steep meadows of bear grass and wildflowers. Spur trails lead from Trail#182 to both Clifty Mountain and Katka Peak. The walk to Clifty Mountain is a very popular destination for single day recreationists. Clifty Mountain offers magnificent views of the Kootenai Valley and the Selkirk range. Recreational use drops past Clifty Mountain. Between Clifty and Katka peaks, Trail #182 remains primarily on the south side of the ridge with excellent views towards Iron Mountain and Slate ridge. Trail #143 (Dobson-McGinty) junctions with Trail #182 approximately 4.5 miles from Road #274. Within another ½ mile, Trail #182 forks; one trail leads to Katka peak and the mainline trail follows Burro ridge to road #408. Within a mile of this junction, Trail #182 enters and traverses old logging units and crosses numerous gated roads. Motorized incursions with ATV's have occurred along this section of trail and that issue would be corrected with this proposed action. Trail #182 is popular for hikers, horse riders, hunters and mountain bikers. It offers few camp sites.

Trailheads are generally composed of a wide spot on the main roads with no developed parking or other features.

Trail #182 is maintained annually.

#### **Trail# #143- Dobson McGinty**

This is currently a 4 mile trail that connects Road #408 to Clifty Mountain trail #182. Historic trail mileage to the north that led to the valley has been abandoned.

Dobson-McGinty trail is steep and timbered. The trail pitch limits use to those recreationists seeking an arduous experience. Although there are no viewpoints from this trail, it passes through one of the most exceptional old growth ponderosa pine stands on the District.

There is no designated trailhead. Trail #143 is maintained annually.

#### **Trail# 136- East Fork Boulder**

This is an 8.5 mile trail that follows the southeast side of the East Fork of Boulder creek to eventually climb to Middle Mountain and intersect with Trail #51. Portions of the trail along the creek follow old wagon/mining roads and are rocky and eroded. Within ¼ mile of the trailhead on Road #314, an enormous slough has taken most of the road/trail, and makes a dangerous traverse for 200 feet. Along lower Trail #136, sights and sounds of the East Fork of Boulder creek are frequent and pleasing. Visual screening along the trail is complete and it gives the recreationist a sense of solitude and remoteness. After 4 or more miles, the trail follows an old fireline/road bed. It crosses road #628 and utilizes the road bridge. The trail begins to climb and becomes less distinct. After the 7 mile marker, the trail passes through openings and rock outcrops which provide striking views of the surrounding mountains. The trail skirts a small meadow near the top of Middle Mountain and junctions with Trail #51.

There is no designated trailhead for this trail. The parking site is also used as a dispersed campsite.

The lower portion of this trail is maintained annually, the upper portion has had some reconstruction work done in the last 10 years and is maintained every 2-3 years.

#### **Trail#51-Timber Mountain**

Trail#51 is a 19 mile trail that provides the backbone for several trail networks most of which are located in the Lake Willard Estelle roadless area. The Hunt Girl Research Area spreads just to the north of ridgeline Trail #51. Views from ridgeline Trail #51 look into the Katka Peak, Willard - Lake Estelle and Roberts Inventoried Roadless Area lands. Trail #51 accesses outdoor settings that include creek side meadows, old growth forests, fragile high elevation landscapes, rugged ridgelines and evidence of early human settlement in the Boulder City ghost town.

From the trailhead on road #427, Trail #51 climbs consistently but at a barely perceptible grade. It crosses many side creeks and overlooks meadows and Bald Eagle ridge, Both the Smythe Creek trail (#515) and the Kelly Pass Trail (#155) junction with Trail #51 in these meadows. After 3.5 miles the trail begins to climb through alder patches, old growth forests and huckleberry fields. Towards the top of the climb the landscape breaks into small grassy meadows which allows views of Boulder Mountain and Bald Eagle ridge as well as distant views of the Selkirk range to the far west. The trail crests the ridge, arrives at Divide Lake and junctions with Trail #176. Trail #51 bears right and climbs to a beautiful grassy meadow that overlooks Boulder and Buck Mountains. The trail winds along the ridge, generally with views to the south. At 7.5 miles, Trail #136 (East Fork Boulder) junctions with Trail #51. Timber Mountain trail is an undulating ridge walk with spectacular views all along the ridge. Beyond Timber Mountain, to the north, Trail #51 begins a long descent. On this side of the mountain, the trail crosses 2 harvested areas and 2 roads. From Road # 314 the final leg of Trail #51 follows an old wagon road that works its way through the historic Boulder City townsite. Motorized incursions are common along this section of trail. Efforts to stop unauthorized use have been somewhat successful.

Trail#51 has a developed trailhead at its' Boulder Meadows terminus, and an open flat used as a trailhead at its' northern-most terminus. This open area has historic importance and has been damaged by motorized use. The District has tried to restrict motorized use with only limited success. There are no trailheads at road crossings.

Trail#51 is maintained annually and has had recent reconstruction work completed.

### **Trail#57-Boulder Meadows**

Trail #57 is a short (1.2 miles) connecting trail that travels through a series of high elevation meadows. The meadow areas are separated by stands of lodgepole pine and Engelmann spruce. Boardwalks and short bridges protect delicate meadow areas but the creek crossing at Boulder creek is undeveloped. Boulder Meadows Trail #57 connects to both the Kelly Pass trail (#155) and the Timber Mountain trail (#51). Although this trail provides access to the greater Boulder trail networks, Boulder Meadows trail has become a popular day walk and access to several campsites in the meadows.

Trail#57 begins at the Boulder trailhead/horse camp and can accommodate three truck/trailer combinations and several passenger vehicles.

Trail #57 is maintained annually.

### **Trail#155-Kelly Pass**

Kelly Pass Trail is an historic trail (1930s) once used to move sheep from Boulder meadows to points south for shipment. A large verse inscribed stone (rapidly fading) marks the Boulder creek crossing. The trail is fairly steep and highly erosive through the meadows. Several user created trails leave Kelly Pass trail to access meadows campsites. Trail #155 improves in the forested

hillsides. Near the 2 mile, Trail #155 crosses Poker Creek to join a newly constructed trail segment that switchbacks to Kelly Pass. Trail #155 connects with Trails #54 (Orville Heath) and #53 (Bald Eagle Mountain) near its' terminus. Kelly Pass Trail continues through Kelly Pass to old non-Forest Service managed trails in the Trail Creek drainage. Kelly Pass trail is approximately 4 miles long.

Trail #155 uses the Boulder Meadows trailhead as a designated trailhead. Horse riders often come through private land and enter the Boulder trail systems from Trail Creek. (Outside the planning area)

Trail#155 is maintained annually and has recently been reconstructed in its' entirety.

#### **Trail#180-Middle Fork Boulder (Iron Mountain)**

Trail #180 is 5.3 miles long. The first quarter mile of trail skirts an existing gravel pit. In places the trail is located 75'-100' from the edge of the pit. Past this trail segment, Trail#180 is steep and rocky. Most of the trail traverses lodgepole pine forests. At 3.7 miles, the trail reaches a saddle with a spur accessing Iron Mountain. The spur climbs through open subalpine fir and spruce habitat. Views from Iron Mountain are long range and incredible. Views include the Kootenai Valley, Selkirk Mountains, Montana and Canada. Remnants of an old lookout and cabin remain. Trail #180, from the junction with the Iron Mountain spur, continues through subalpine forest for another 1.2 miles before it junctions with trail #176. (Buck Mountain) From the ridge trail, far ranging vistas are the norm.

Trail #180 has an undeveloped trailhead that it shares with Trail #176. It is located at a road spur which leads to a gravel pit.

Trail #180 is maintained annually.

#### **Trail#176-Buck Mountain**

Trail #176 is an 8 mile trail that completes several trail networks. It begins by side hilling through a forested habitat for 2.3 miles at which point it gains the ridge. At 3.1 miles a spur trail junctions to an old lookout site. The mainline trail is indistinct. Lookout remnants at the overlook are not noticeable. This vantage point views lands to the east and south where Timber, Star and Middle mountains can be seen. From the spur trail junction, mainline Trail #176 continues to climb and provides filtered views through the subalpine forest. At 5.3 miles, it intersects with Trail #180 in a large bear grass covered meadow. This is a dramatically beautiful section of trail with long range views east towards Montana and west to the Selkirk Mountains. Within ½ mile of the trail junction with Trail #176, Trail #176 meets Trail #515, a trail leading into Boulder Meadows. Trail #176 continues along the ridge until it reaches Divide Lake and junctions with Timber Mountain Trail #51.

Trail #176 shares a trailhead with Trail #180. It is undeveloped but large enough for several vehicles. It can accommodate a truck/trailer combination but with difficulty.

This trail is maintained annually.

#### **Trial #515- Smythe Creek**

Trail #515 is a 2.1 trail that connects Trail #51 in Boulder Meadows to Ridge Trail #176, Buck Mountain. It is steep and in places, eroded. It climbs through a mixed coniferous forest to sub-

alpine habitat near the ridge. Within a mile, open spots along the trail offer views towards Kelly Pass, and at higher elevations, include views of the Selkirk Range. Trail #515 crosses several smaller streams and at 1.2 miles, it fords a 20' stream. Smythe Creek Trail is a commonly used wildlife trail and signs of moose, deer, bear, and elk are typical. The trail junction of Trail #515 and Trail #176 presents an outstanding panoramic view.

Trail #515 junctions with 2 trails. There is no independent trailhead.

This trail is maintained annually.

#### **Trail#54- Orville Heath**

Orville Heath trail #54 is a 5.6 mile connecting trail between Trail #51, (Timber Mountain) and Kelly Pass Trail #155. It also accesses the Bald Eagle-Grouse Mountain Trail# 53, and the Pend Oreille Divide trail #67 from the Sandpoint District. From Trail #51, Orville Heath Trail is a gradual climb through spruce, fir and huckleberry brush. At 1.5 miles Trail 54 junctions with Trail# 67 (to the Sandpoint District and Lunch Peak.) Trail #54 undulates along a forested side hill, crossing several streams to reach a rocky outcrop with beautiful views towards Boulder Mountain at the 2.4 mile. The trail then winds between ridge knobs and within several hundred feet it passes a lovely little (seasonal) lake. Several hundred feet past this lake views open towards Lake Pend Oreille and Bald Eagle Mountain. The ridge trail passes bogs and wallows with much evidence of game trails and wildlife. For the final 2 miles, trail #54 crosses several additional creeks and offers filtered landscape views to its' junction with Bald Eagle Mountain Trail#53 at the 5.6 mile mark.

This trail has no trailhead.

This trail is maintained annually and has had recent reconstruction work.

#### **Trail #184- Kootenai River Walk**

This 5.2 mile trail is located on a rim above, and paralleling the Kootenai River. The Purcell Range serves as a visual backdrop. Views of the Purcell Mountains and the Kootenai River are abundant and breathtaking. Trail #184 uses an historic mining wagon road (1880's) for its location. Evidence of old stone work, flumes and dumpsites occur along the route. The trail passes through both old growth forests and modified landscapes. On the western end, a short spur trail leads past tiny Clancy Lake and terminates at a dramatic view of the Kootenai River and lands to the east. This is an exceptional and unique trail for the District. Low elevation and moderate topography are attributes that offer a long season of use. It is an easy trail (with the exception of the gated access) and is open to all non-motorized uses. Unfortunately Trail #184 is accessed on the northwestern end via a 2 mile, highly eroded, gated road and on the southeastern end via old skid trails intersecting with Road #314.

Current trailheads are wide spots on Road #314 with the western-most being the larger.

This trail is maintained annually. Reconstruction work has been done in the last several years.

#### ***Dispersed recreation:***

Most of the BCRP area is in IRAs and limited access is provided by a basic network of opened and rarely maintained roads, a few gated, low-level roads, and non-motorized trails. Roadside camping is typical on any open road in the planning area. Maintained roads #314 (Katka), #408 and #427

offer easy access to dispersed sites. Dispersed camping opportunities are exceptional along Boulder Creek and the East fork of Boulder Creek. All open roads have user-developed campsites along or just outside road prisms. User-created non-system access to favorite campsites is common along roads #408 and #427. Campsites are located near trail crossings, streams, huckleberry fields or favorite hunting spots. Dispersed camping near the junction of FS road #314 (Katka) and Boulder Creek is congested enough to be out of character with the surrounding landscape yet consistent with this centuries' historic human use. (See Gaging Station discussion)

Throughout the planning area, the overall feeling at most campsites is one of natural or manmade openings within a wooded setting. Rural human development seems remote. There is ample opportunity for solitude and isolation. Vehicle use is low enough that even roadside campsites are rarely disturbed. Generally sites have one, if not more, campfire rings in addition to a variety of shelter poles, shelves, and seats constructed with native materials. Trash and firewood debris are common. Use varies throughout the season. It would be rare that all dispersed sites are filled at any one time. The Katka road #314 serves as early spring access and area use is consistent throughout the summer season. There is a substantial, site-specific increase in use during the huckleberry season and steady use throughout fall hunting seasons.

Many dispersed sites have such a long history of use and are so popular that they have locally designated names and can be specifically discussed. (See below)

Day use along Road #314 is consistent with a mix of commercial, local, and recreational vehicle traffic. Road use is moderate throughout most of the analysis area. Driving for pleasure is a very popular practice along the Katka Road as far as Gaging station. Other roads in the area require higher clearance vehicles and are primarily destination access. Gathering forest products such as berries, Christmas trees, firewood, and mushrooms, is a popular recreational pursuit. Camping, hiking, and riding are typical. In addition, the BCRP area provides a full range of hunting opportunities throughout the year.

Winter over-snow use is generally limited to road riding. Use is low. There are no notable winter play areas within the planning area.

### **Boulder Gaging Station**

Boulder Gaging Station is the heart of the Katka/Boulder cultural resource area. The Boulder Creek drainage has long been known for historic mining ventures and early day railroad construction. In more recent history, the Forest Service utilized this site for water collection. Remnants of old trolley systems and a Gaging station remain.

This area continues to attract mineral seekers as well as a wide variety of recreationists. The "Boulder Gaging Station" site is a collection of user created parking, old roadbed remnants, and developed pullouts next to the Boulder Creek Bridge on Road #314. (Five or more individual sites are clustered near the bridge area; several are large enough to accommodate 2 or more vehicles, or truck/trailer combinations.) Dispersed camping has continued to expand along the creek and into historic townsites areas. Unfortunately, the sites' proximity to Bonners Ferry has also fairly consistently encouraged its' use a "kegger" rendezvous place.

A wooden building, vault toilet supported the site until 10 years ago when it could no longer be serviced and was removed. This has created a dramatic trash and health issue.

The area has been publicized by the Bonners Ferry Chamber of Commerce for years without benefit of interpretive facilities or management control.

In the fall of 2015, the road on the south side of the bridge washed away. Access to those camping sites as well as several sites themselves washed away with the flooding. The entire area will need to be re-defined after the road is rebuilt.

Trail #136 terminates on the south side of the bridge.

### **Idamont Townsite**

The “town” of Idamont was built by and for mine workers. In the early 1900’s, it included dwellings, a school, church and bank. Remnants of foundations, old roofs and connecting trails remain. The site was easily accessed by standard passenger vehicles prior to 2015 flooding. Structures have been vandalized and burned. The site of the old bank foundation is a particularly popular “party” spot. The setting is pleasant and flat. There is no protection or signage at the site.

### **Boulder Cemetery**

Boulder Cemetery is a small collection of gravesites at the end of road #4402. A low, partially deteriorated fence separates the graves from a pullout used for parking. Markers indicate the early 1900’s. Local citizens help maintain the site. Unfortunately, some of the maintenance has been done without archeological prescription. The site is quiet and sits far above Boulder Creek. Generally people who find the site treat it with respect. Maps and tourist information indicate the cemetery location. There is no protection or signage at the site.

### **Road 427 at the Boulder creek bridge**

This site was one of many early Forest Service camping sites. It hosted a wooden building, vault toilet and a picnic table and fire ring. Over the years the site deteriorated. The picnic table was burned and only rock lined fire rings remain.

In the late 1990’s the District eliminated motorized access to Boulder Meadows. A short road section was retained and developed into the Boulder Meadows trailhead. The trailhead was to remain at the Meadows dependent upon District success in eliminating motorized use past the trailhead. At that time, a concrete SST was placed near the camp site at Road 427, and a wooden building vault toilet was installed at the trailhead. The rationale was that the campsite on Road #427 would become the trailhead should the District be unable to eliminate motorized use in the meadows.

The site is smaller group site. It is not designed. Access to the site is a short steep pitch but 2 vehicles with small trailers could easily camp next to the creek and near the road. This site has low to moderate use.

### **Twentymile pass**

This site is located on Road #408, just before the road descends into the Boulder Creek drainage. It began as an intersection of the road and trails leading to Black Mountain (north), Kelly Pass (southeast) and Shiloh Guard Station to the southwest. Throughout the 1950’s it served as a campsite for Forest Service crews who installed phone lines and opened trails.

There are no site amenities. There is no water on site. This site has low to moderate use throughout

the huckleberry and hunting seasons.

### **McGinty at Boulder Creek**

This site was an early Forest Service camp site. Road access is rough requiring high clearance vehicles. The site hosts an old wooden pit-style toilet. It overlooks Boulder Creek and was maintained as a campsite throughout the 1970's. It is a fairly popular day use area, and continues to have overnight campers. The site does not benefit from routine maintenance.

### **Boulder Meadows**

There are multiple campsites within the meadows area. They are suitable only for tent camping. Sites range in size from single tent camping to sites large enough to accommodate stock and riders. They are generally located along the creek. Often there are user developed trails throughout the meadows, connecting sites to each other, or to FS designated trails or to the creek. A full range of user constructed amenities exist including corrals, caches, dumps, picnic tables, shelves and fire pits.

The meadows area is highly popular for day use as well as overnight use. It is one of the few places on the District that can easily accommodate stock. It's popular with stock users from Washington and Montana as well as local use. The Boulder Meadows area is under special use for both horse riding and hunting. The Meadows are used consistently throughout the summer and hunting seasons. Occasional snowmobile use occurs.

### **Divide lake**

Divide lake is a shallow, mud-bottomed lake and is the only water for miles in any direction. It is located in a swale between rugged Boulder Mountain and granite ridges to the southeast. Lakeside edges are fragile and appropriate camping sites are limited. Stunted subalpine fir and spruce surround the lake. Damage from recreational use is substantial. Every bit of flat land has been used as a camp spot. Tree damage from stock and firewood collection is critical. In 2016, boardwalks and an access to the lake edge were installed. Lake edge restoration work was initiated. A highline for stock and continued restoration efforts will continue in 2017. The boardwalk and lake access are somewhat inconsistent with the primitive nature of the site, but were considered critical to stop further degradation. Divide lake is used through the summer and hunting seasons and is the major stop over for many trail networks. The lake edge and trails towards Middle Mountain are located within the Hunt Girl Natural Area.

## **Desired Condition**

The desired future condition for recreation can be found in the 2015 Forest Plan and has been developed over time through Forest-wide and local recreation niche, accessibility, and tourism planning.

For the BCRP area, open Forest roads and trails in the area would be well maintained, open to the public, meet accessible requirements as possible, and would provide safe access for the general public. Improvements would be made to accommodate current use as well as expected increased future use. All improvements would be made with the intent of retaining a balance of rustic/natural/roadless landscapes and man-made environments. Most site improvements would be made to define appropriate use rather than to expand site dimensions. With the exception of

interpretive hubs and camping near the Boulder Gaging/Boulder City townsite or at the Boulder Meadows trailhead, there would be low probability of experiencing sights and sounds of other user groups. Isolation from sights and sounds of humans would be the norm. In general, the visitor could expect a feeling of closeness to nature, opportunities associated with primitive recreation, and tranquility. Visitors would need a degree of outdoor skills in an environment that offers risk and challenge.

General:

Landscapes would retain a diversity of recreational opportunities. Cultural sites would fuse easily with both natural and manmade openings. Views from trails, roads and recreation sites would offer a range of natural unmodified landscapes to modifications that would resemble landscape burn patterns. In general, modifications would be harmonious or blend with geological features. Lands in the northeast will appear physically heavily modified but will retain more primitive social characteristics.

Recreational use would increase on trails and at both developed and dispersed sites. Typical recreation tools such as restriction, permitting, site hardening, site rehabilitation and others will be considered as the need arises to allow maximum recreational use while protecting the lands within the planning area. Other activities such as trail and trailhead development, interpretive work and archeological site protection are detailed in the environmental analysis.

A blend of open roads and open trails would allow access throughout the project area. All trails will remain open to non-motorized uses.

Trails, developed and dispersed sites would be accessed via safe and well maintained roads.

Developed sites and interpretive trails would be as fully accessible as possible within landscape parameters.

Developed and dispersed sites would retain a rustic appearance and would meld into the surrounding landscape.

Trails would be adequate for a full range of recreational opportunities including camping, biking, stock use, hunting, gathering berries and other forest products, fishing, etc. Trails in the IRA's would be adequate primarily for safe passage and protection of the natural environment.

### *Specific Desired Recreation Goals:*

#### **Developed Recreation**

##### **Black Mountain Lookout**

Black Mountain Lookout and relocation site were analyzed in the 2012 Twentymile Environmental Analysis and will not be re-analyzed here.

##### **Boulder Meadows Horse Camp (trailhead)**

Boulder Meadows trailhead would be re-designed to accommodate 3 truck/trailer combinations, 4-5 passenger vehicles and an SST. Existing fencing would be rebuilt to better identify non-

motorized use areas. The existing campsite would be better protected from motorized incursion and site amenities would be restored.

### **Trails**

All existing trail mileage would be retained. Additional “discovery” or interpretive trails would be constructed in the Idamont townsite area. Trailheads would be constructed as the landscape allows. New trail segments will be built to connect to trailheads. Trails will retain current management objectives. Trails within the IRAs will be maintained to protect the resource and to allow safe passage. Visitors should expect a degree of challenge and risk. Trails will be in harmony with natural landscapes.

Specifically:

#### **Trail#182**

Use on Trail #182 would continue to be primarily day use. Trail#182 would remain highly popular from Road#274 to Clifty Peak. Use would increase over time to include additional mountain biking use over the full trail length. Views on the south side of the ridge would remain as Natural or Natural appearing landscapes. Trail tread and location would be clearly identified throughout the roaded and harvest areas on the eastern trail portion. Motorized incursions would be eliminated. A trailhead would accommodate use from the eastern terminus of Trail#182.

#### **Trail#143**

Trail #143 would retain its current location and rugged characteristics. Use would continue to be low to moderate. A trailhead would accommodate parking with a short connecting trail to existing Trail#143.

#### **Trail #136**

The northern terminus of Trail#136 would be abandoned at Road#314. A trailhead would be built in or near unit 174 and a connecting trail would be established to meet current Trail#136. Trail#136 would be clearly identified through the proposed logging units and at the Road #628 crossing. Trail use would increase substantially as a safe trail segment is established.

#### **Trail #51**

Trail #51 would continue to serve as the backbone of trail networks in the Boulder area. The trailhead at road #427 would be rebuilt as described under ‘The Boulder Horse Camp.’ A trailhead on the northern-most terminus (Road #4402) would be developed to allow passenger vehicle and stock trailer use while protecting cultural sites and eliminating illegal motorized entry. Road crossings at Roads #314 and #1304G would be well marked and barricaded to prevent illegal motorized entry. Within IRA’s, views from trail #51 would remain natural and would accentuate pristine, rugged landscapes. North of Timber Mountain, Trail #51 would admit a modified landscape without a full loss of the sense of remoteness. Use through roadless areas would remain low. Mountain bike and stock use from Road #314 to Road#1304G would increase. Closed road#1304G would serve as a loop for both mountain bikers and stock riders. Trail use from Road#4402 to Road#314 would be moderate and may include interpretive features.

#### **Trail #57- Boulder Meadows**

Boulder Meadows trails would remain intact and well maintained. Use would be moderate and would continue to encourage day use as well as access to campsites and long distance trails. Access to campsites in the meadows would be limited. Creek crossings would be improved through ford construction, trail hardening, or relocation as necessary.

**Trail #155- Kelly Pass**

Kelly Pass trail through the meadows area would be reconstructed to be consistent with the forested portion of the trail. Use would remain moderate. Use patterns would remain similar to current use patterns.

**Trail #180- Middle Fork Boulder (Iron Mountain)**

Trail #180 would retain its' current location and rugged characteristics. Use would continue to be low to moderate. A trailhead shared with Trail #176- Buck Mountain, would accommodate parking for both stock trailers and passenger vehicles.

**Trail #176-Buck Mountain**

Trail #176 would be reconstructed to re-gain safe stock passage along its' entire length. Trail junctions would be signed and adequately identified. Trail #176 would have a developed trailhead, shared with Trail#180. Use would remain moderate.

**Trail # 515-Smythe Creek**

Trail #515 would generally retain its' current location and rugged characteristic. Erosion measures and improved creek crossings would be in place. Use would continue to be low to moderate.

**Trail #54-Orville Heath**

Orville Heath Trail#54 would continue to be a mainline connecting trail. It would be reconstructed to re-gain safe stock passage along its' entire length. Use would remain low to moderate.

**Trail#184- Kootenai River Walk**

Road 2209 would be open and drive-able to the Trail#184 trailhead. Road 2209 would be barriered to motorized use past the trailhead. Trail #184 would remain open to all non-motorized uses. All junctions and intersections would be clearly marked. Interpretive information would be available. Use would be moderate to heavy.

**Dispersed Sites:**

In general throughout the planning area, the overall feeling at most campsites would remain one of natural or manmade openings within a wooded setting. With the exception of the Boulder Gaging/Boulder City dispersed sites, rural human development would seem remote. A number of dispersed sites within the planning area would remain available at any one time. Site-specific increases in use during the huckleberry season and steady use throughout fall hunting seasons would remain typical. Sites would be clean and located appropriately with regards to water features. Road and trail access to dispersed sites would be safe and maintained.

As recreational populations increase, day use along open roads would tend upwards to moderate in

portions of the analysis area. Site specific use along the Katka Road (FS#314), the Twentymile Road (FS#408) and Black Mountain Road (FS#274) would remain heavier and more constant than in other parts of the planning area. Roadside gathering forest products such as berries, Christmas trees, firewood, and mushrooms, would remain popular recreational pursuits within the analysis area.

Winter motorized over-snow use would remain generally limited to road riding. Use would remain light.

## Environmental Consequences

### *Alternative 1 – No Action*

Alternative 1 would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to recreation related resources. Existing recreation opportunities would not change. Recreation activities such as driving for pleasure, hunting, camping, hiking, horse riding, gathering forest products including berries, firewood, mushrooms, etc. would continue. Public access would not change. None of the ROS classes would change and the area would trend away from desired conditions.

### *Effects Common to all action alternatives (2 and 3)*

#### Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

None of the action alternatives would permanently change the current Recreation Opportunity Spectrum within the planning area. All planned activities are appropriate in the Semi-Primitive and Roaded Natural ROS environments. Developed and dispersed sites within the area would experience social modifications due to increased traffic and activity. Contacts and encounters would likely increase for the duration of the planned activities, yet encounters would generally increase primarily on access roads to trailheads and dispersed camping sites. Roadside activities such as berry picking and firewood gathering may be interrupted temporarily.

All of the proposed road work will increase safe travel and would not conflict or change ROS classifications.

Due to the type and amount of recreation that occurs during the winter season, winter harvest activities would change the social recreational settings for very few visitors. The social setting, for winter, would return to its current characteristic at the end of project activities.

All treatment activities and outcomes would be appropriate in the Roaded Natural, and Semi-Primitive ROS environments.

#### Forest Plan

All proposed activities meet Forest Plan standards for recreation and are available in the project file.

#### Desired Future Condition

Portions of trails #51, #136, #176, #180, #182, and #143, as well as lands near and around

Boulder Gaging Station and Boulder Meadows Horse Camp would experience intrusive activities. Traffic would increase substantially and sights and sounds of planned activities would be very apparent. Landscape alterations would remain at the terminus of the project. Although planned activities would replicate past activities along Burro ridge and the lower East Fork area, landscape alterations would display a striking difference between characteristics of a highly managed forest and those of an Inventoried Roadless Area. Social increases would decline after planned activities are complete.

Sections of trail #182 from proposed unit 409 to Road #314 would likely be damaged and road crossings impaired.

With all action alternatives, trails #176, #180, (with the exception of the mutual trailhead) #155, #515, #143 and portions of #51 and #182 would retain near Primitive status in the long range.

Fuels reduction work at The Boulder Horse Camp is identical in all action alternatives

Roadwork on road #2209 would be approved in all action alternatives.

None of the proposed activities would impede future desired condition goals for recreation. The action alternatives provide the initial analysis for desired conditions for Trail #184, (trailhead development and access) Trail #136 (trailhead development and elimination of massive erosion concerns) Boulder Gaging Station design and interpretation, and protection of Boulder meadows at the Boulder Horse Camp.

### *Alternative 2 - Proposed Action*

With respect to the recreational user experience, alternative 2 would create disturbance in the form of logging noise and log truck traffic during the weekdays. Trails that intersect any proposed harvest units would be closed for safety reason during operations. The trail tread would be protected as outlined in the design features (see below). Openings created via harvest or prescribed burning would regenerate with trees over a 5 – 10 year period depending on site conditions. Prescribed burning operations would include helicopter noise and smoke for a few days a year.

### *Alternative 3 - No activities in IRAs*

Alternative 3 does not propose any activities in the IRA's. Effects to recreational users in the IRA's would not change from present conditions. Because we would not be implementing the prescribed burning in the IRAs, there would be no helicopter noise or smoke generated from those specific operations for the recreation user to contend with.

### **Recreational Opportunity Setting**

None of the action alternatives would permanently change the current Recreation Opportunity Spectrum within the planning area. All planned activities are appropriate in the Semi-Primitive and Roaded Natural ROS environments.

### **Forest Plan**

All proposed activities meet Forest Plan standards for recreation.

## Current and Desired future Condition

The introduction of fuels reduction (prescribed burning) activities would temporarily affect long segments of trails in the planning area. Trails either traverse planned burn areas, view them from afar, or both. Activities would be temporarily intrusive at the Boulder Meadows Horse Camp. Traffic would increase substantially, and sights and sounds of planned activities such as helicopter noise would be very apparent for a few days per year. Planned fuels activities would ultimately appear natural and would be in concert with the existing landscape. Helicopter use would temporarily reduce the feeling of remoteness and solitude associated with Primitive and semi-Primitive settings. Upon completion of the work, the setting would return to the Semi Primitive Non-Motorized condition it now exhibits.

## Direct, and Indirect Effects-Alternative 2

All direct and indirect results of Alternative 2 have been identified in “Effects Common to All Action Alternatives”

## Summary

### *Effects to Recreation*

Boulder planning area has been recognized as a primitive recreation area for more than 30 years. Two Inventoried Roadless areas, (Katka and Mt. Willard - Lake Estelle) comprise the largest portion of the BCRP planning area. Mt. Willard Lake - Estelle Roadless lands extend into Montana and the Kootenai National Forest.

The effects of management activity in the BCRP area on developed and undeveloped recreational opportunities will be measured in changes to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), compliance with the Land Management Plan or Forest Plan, and the degree to which the activities compliment or conflict with recreation desired future condition for sites and experiences.

**Table 1. Recreation Resource Indicators and Measures**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measures
Recreation	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum	ROS Classes
	Forest Plan Standards	Compliance With IPNF Land Management Plan
	Desired Conditions	Compliment or Conflict with IPNF Land Management Plan

### *Effects to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)*

**Summary:** None of the action alternatives would permanently change the current Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) within the BCRP planning area. All planned activities are appropriate in the Semi-Primitive and Roaded Natural ROS environments.

## Supporting Information

### Direct and Indirect Effects

#### *Alternative 1*

This alternative would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to recreation related resources. Existing recreation opportunities, public access and ROS classifications would not change. Recreation activities such as driving for pleasure, hunting, camping, hiking, horse riding, gathering forest products including berries, firewood, mushrooms, etc. would continue. Indirectly however, improvements to recreation and heritage features as described in alternatives 2 and 3 would not occur. Unregulated dispersed camping and user created trails could continue to expand, contributing to resource damage from soil erosion and noxious weeds. Safety concerns with brushed in trailheads and narrow roads with limited site distance would also continue.

#### *Alternatives 2 and 3*

None of the action alternatives would permanently change the current Recreation Opportunity Spectrum within the planning area. All planned activities are appropriate in the Semi-Primitive and Roaded Natural ROS environments.

### Cumulative Effects

No cumulative effects were identified for the ROS resource Indicator. All past, present and reasonably foreseeable activities are appropriate for the Semi Primitive and Roaded Natural ROS classes.

## Design Features and Mitigation Measures

Recreation design features concern user safety, quality and retention of existing recreational opportunities, opportunity for future recreational use, and limitation of illegal transportation methods or activities.

**Safety on roads, dispersed sites, trails and trailheads:** Project activities will occur on selected roads in the planning area. Recreational use along the road systems is not confined to weekend use. Boulder Creek is a popular camping, hunting and huckleberry picking area. Roads in the area are single lane gravel roads often without adequate turn outs. Dispersed sites are generally located along road corridors so increased traffic due to project activities will increase risk to recreationists and Forest workers alike.

For trail networks that traverse both logging and prescribed burning units.

- A “No haul” on weekends and holidays protocol would be followed throughout the year.
- Access to dispersed campsites would be protected throughout project activities.
- Trailheads would not be used as landing areas, or sites to park equipment.
- Road reconstruction or maintenance should include either turnout development or turnout restoration as possible.
- Guidance identified in the fire and fuels discussion concerning public safety would be followed.

- In consideration of public safety, trail or area closures would be considered on trails #182, #136 and #51, whenever logging operations occur within two tree lengths of these trails.

Site protection:

- Trails traverse units 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Any changes in this protocol would be reviewed by the IDT.
- For Road 427A, burn unit #12, initiate 100 feet from the road on the east side to preserve thickets for roadside screening. All trailhead features including boardwalks, toilets, signage and fences would be protected.
- ATVs would not be used for access to burning activities in any roadless or on non-motorized trails.
- For units along trails #182 and #136, slash would be pulled back a minimum of 4' from the trail tread on each side of the trail.
- In group selection and seed tree units, (trails #182, #136, #143, #176, #180, and #51) purchaser would repair any damage to trail tread resulting from logging operations.
- When piling slash, the locations and numbers of times equipment crosses the trail would be limited. Slash piles would be located outside of the trail corridor to the extent feasible.
- Improvements to road #2113 would allow for continuous access via Trail #182.
- At the Trail #51 junction with proposed temporary road, (near unit 236): ensure that trail is identified across the temporary road prism. The trail access would be fenced or protected from motorized use.
- Should gravel pit expansion near the terminus of trails #176 and #180 cause damage to trails, a new trailhead and access trail would be established.

Limitation for illegal transportation methods or activities:

- A physical barrier would be created along the southwest side of unit 128 to prevent ATV or other motorized incursion.
- A guardrail barrier would be installed across road #2209 just beyond the new trailhead for the River Walk Trail #184,
- Physical barriers would be installed where Trail #182 crosses road networks in units 409, 404, 108, 136, 120, and 356.
- Physical barriers would be installed, as needed, in units 236, 238 and 234, to allow only non-motorized access on Trail #51.
- The western edges of units 238 and 196 would use thickets or trees to reduce the possibility of illegal motorized use, or the development of any user created trails.